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Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY LAGOS PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 126594

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PPDC, PGOV, NI

SUBJECT:PRESIDENTIAL CORRESPONDENCE: LETTER FROM GENERAL OBASANJO TO PRESIDENT CARTER

1. NIGERIAN EMBASSY DELIVERED FOLLOWING LETTER DATED APRIL 20 FROM HEAD OF STATE OBASANJO TO PRESIDENT CARTER. AMBASSADOR EASUM SAW ORIGINAL DURING HIS STAY IN WASHINGTON. REPLY TO LETTER, SIGNED BY THE PRESIDENT MAY 18, BEING TRANSMITTED SEPTEL.

2. TEXT FOLLOWS: DEAR PRESIDENT CARTER,
NOW THAT THE DAR-ES-SALAM CONFERENCE IS OVER AND BOTH SECRETARY VANCE AND DR. OWEN HAVE RETURNED FROM PRETORIA AND SALISBURY, I THINK THAT IT WOULD BE USEFUL FOR ME TO EXCHANGE VIEWS WITH YOU AGAIN ON THE ZIMBABWE QUESTION IN ORDER TO MAINTAIN THE PRESENT MOMENTUM.
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YOU WILL RECALL, MR. PRESIDENT, THE EFFORTS WE BOTH MADE DURING YOUR VISIT HERE IN LAGOS TO ENSURE THAT THE ANGLO-AMERICAN PROPOSALS WERE PUT BACK ON THE RAILS. IT WAS AS A RESULT OF THESE EFFORTS THAT WE, IN FULL CONSULTATION WITH THE FRONT-LINE STATES, AGREED TO HOLD THE DAR-ES-SALAM CONFERENCE TO BE FOLLOWED ALMOST IMMEDIATELY WITH AN

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ALL-PARTIES CONFERENCE.

I HAVE BEEN FULLY BRIEFED BY MY COMMISSIONER FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS ON THE OUTCOME OF THE DAR-ES-SALAM CONFERENCE AND I AM CONFIDENT THAT WITH A LITTLE MORE PATIENCE AND PERSEVERANCE WE SHOULD BE ABLE TO MAINTAIN THE MOMENTUM. I DO NOT BELIEVE THAT THE PATRIOTIC FRONT ARE BEING INTRANSIGENT IN MAKING SOME OF THE PROPOSALS THEY MADE IN DAR-ES-SALAM PARTICULARLY ON THE QUESTION OF THE POLICE FORCE. I BELIEVE THAT A MUTUALLY ACCEPTABLE AGREEMENT COULD STILL BE WORKED OUT WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF THE ANGLO-AMERICAN PROPOSALS IF THERE IS A WILLINGNESS ON ALL SIDES TO SIT DOWN TO SERIOUS DISCUSSION.

WE PREFER TO LOOK ON THE POSITIVE SIDE OF THE DAR-ES-SALAM MEETING. THE PATRIOTIC FRONT ACCEPTED THE POSITION OF THE RESIDENT COMMISSIONER AS NOT ONLY THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE ARMED FORCES AND THE POLICE BUT ALSO AS HAVING FULL EXECUTIVE POWERS FOR DEFENCE AND LAW AND ORDER. THIS WE SEE AS A POSITIVE SIGN OF THEIR DESIRE TO MOVE FORWARD. SECONDLY, MR. PRESIDENT, THEY HAVE ACCEPTED THE UNITED NATIONS PEACE KEEPING FORCE CONSISTING OF BOTH THE MILITARY ELEMENT AND CIVILIAN POLICE ELEMENT. THIRDLY, THEIR PROPOSAL ON THE QUESTION OF THE GOVERNING COUNCIL IS OPEN TO NEGOTIATION.
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YOU WILL AGREE WITH ME, MR. PRESIDENT, THAT THE PURPOSE OF AN ALL-PARTIES MEETING IS TO IRON OUT ALL OUTSTANDING DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE PATRIOTIC FRONT AND THE SALISBURY GROUP IN THE GENERAL CONTEXT OF THE ANGLO-AMERICAN PROBOSALS. CONSEQUENTLY, IT WOULD HAVE BEEN TOO MUCH TO EXPECT THAT THE LEADERS OF THE PATRIOTIC FRONT WILL MAKE ALL THE NECESSARY CONCESSIONS IN DAR-ES-SALAM WITHOUT KNOWING WHAT THE SALISBURY GROUP WOULD DO.

WITH REGARD TO THE CONTENTIOUS QUESTION OF WHETHER OR NOT THE PRESENT RHODESIAN POLICE FORCE SHOULD BE LEFT WITH THE SOLE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE MAINTENANCE OF LAW AND ORDER DURING THE TRANSITION, I BELIEVE THAT THERE IS STILL PLENTY OF ROOM TO REACH AN ACCEPTABLE AGREEMENT. HOWEVER, NIGERIA AND THE FRONT-LINE STATES SHARE THE CON-CERN OF THE PATRIOTIC FRONT ABOUT NOT WANTING TO REPOSE FULL CONFIDENCE IN THE RHODESIAN POLICE AS NOW CONSTITUTED.

THESE ARE THE REASONS WHY I FIND IT DIFFICULT TO SUPPORT THE RATHER PESSIMISTIC ASSESSMENT BY THE STATE DEPARTMENT ON THE OUTCOME OF THE DAR-ES-SALAM CONFERENCE. WE

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SHOULD REMOVE EVERY OBSTACLE AND FORGE AHEAD IN OUR JOINT

EFFORT TO ACHIEVE PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT IN ZIMBABWE. I
AGREE WITH YOU THAT THE PRESS STATEMENTS CREDITED TO SOME
OF THE LEADERS OF THE PATRIOTIC FRONT MAY NOT HAVE BEEN
VERY HELPFUL AT THIS DELICATE PERIOD; BUT YOU WILL
AGREE WITH ME THAT TOO MUCH IMPORTANCE SHOULD NOT BE
ATTACHED TO PRESS INTERVIEWS. FINALLY, I WOULD WISH
TO APPEAL TO YOU TO CONSIDER AN APPROACH TO THE SHAH OF
IRAN WHO, I AM TOLD, HAD EARLIER INDICATED TO SECRETARY
VANCE HIS WILLINGNESS TO PERSUADE THE SOUTH AFRICANS ON
THE SUPPLY OF OIL TO THE ILLEGAL RHODESIAN REGIME. I
BELIEVE THAT WE SHOULD DO ALL IN OUR POWER TO CONTINUE
THE SEARCH FOR A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT THAT WOULD ENSURE
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THROUGH FREE AND FAIR ELECTIONS, THE ADVENT OF A GENUINE
MAJORITY RULE GOVERNMENT IN ZIMBABWE. WE CAN STILL DO
A LOT TO PREVENT A CIVIL WAR WITH THE CONSEQUENT OUTSIDE
INTERVENTION IN ZIMBABWE.

PLEASE ACCEPT, MR. PRESIDENT, THE ASSURANCES OF MY
HIGHEST CONSIDERATION AND ESTEEM. LT. GENERAL
OLUSEGUN OBASANJO, HEAD OF THE FEDERAL MILITARY GOVERNMENT,
COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE ARMED FORCES OF THE FEDERAL
REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA. VANCE

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